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Mr. Ely's

SERMON

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF HIS

Son.

A GOSPEL MINISTER, THOUGH YOUNG, SHOULD BE RESPECTABLE BY HIS EXAMPLE.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CHURCH IN WEST-CHESTER, IN COLCHESTER,

OCTOBER 1, 1806.

BY ZEBULON ELY, A. M.
Pastor of a Church in Lebanon.

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Ordination Sermon.

I. TIMOTHY iv. 12.

Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

THE writings of the apostle Paul constitute no inconsiderable portion of the invaluable treasure, contained in the sacred scriptures. His epistles to Timothy, his own son in the faith, exceedingly dear to him, are well worthy the attention of all, but especially, of young ministers. Here they may have the advantage of the counsel resulting from the experience of an aged and most eminent minister, and an inspired apostle.

The consideration of the portion of advice given to Timothy, in the passage now read, it is apprehended, will not be judged unsuitable to the present solemn occasion.

"Let no man despise thy youth," &c. Youth, in itself considered, contains nothing worthy of reproach. It is a season of life that is lovely, pleasing, precious. But, from want of experience and riper judgment, there are certain indiscretions and vanities, incident to youth, which greatly lessen the respectability of man, in that early stage of his existence. These however, may be avoided. They do not necessarily belong to youth. Some, though young in years, appear, comparatively, old in experience, and conduct with the reputable gravity of gray hairs. Such a deportment, our great apostle, wished his beloved son Timothy to exhibit. As the surest way to avoid being despised on account of his youth, he would have him be guilty of nothing despicable.

To this end, he exhorts him in the words following, "But be thou an example of the believers in word," &c. Observe it behoveth gospel ministers to distinguish themselves among believers by their exemplary holiness. As they are appointed officers under the great head of the church, so it is to be expected that their example should shine with peculiar brightness. Unto them believers are to look, and learn, how it behoveth them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are to be an example to believers,

1. In word. If by word here as distinguished from the other particulars that follow, we understand *scriptural knowledge, purity of language, veracity or good judgment*, it constitutes an important branch of Christian example.

THE BIBLE is a store-house of intellectual treasure, of immense value. Would we learn the most wonderful things, into which men or angels are capable of looking; would we learn to conduct ourselves with that beautiful propriety, which will render us acceptable to God, to holy angels, to saints and to the excellent of the earth; would we become wise unto salvation, we should search the scriptures with all diligence. Gospel ministers, particularly, should possess a thorough knowledge of the contents of the sacred volume. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people are to seek the law at his mouth. He should be established in the belief of the great doctrines that God hath revealed, and in the practice of the duties that God hath enjoined, that he may inculcate them with clearness, precision and firmness.

If by word here we understand *veracity*, surely it is an indispensible requisite in the sacred character. A Christian must be a man of his word, for all liars shall have their part in the lake. The word of a Christian minister should be that upon which reliance may be placed.

If by word here we understand *good judgment*, this is highly important. Being a leader in the house of God, it behoveth a gospel minister to be discreet, to exercise sound judgment. He should be capable of giving wholesome advice to those who may consult him, in cases of conscience, and in all prudential matters.

2. In conversation. A man's conversation goes far in determining his character, and in rendering

him useful or otherwise in the world. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Solemn is the declaration of our Lord, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment." For by thy words thou shall be justified (*if thou art justified*) and by thy words thou shall be condemned (*if thou art condemned.*) Much instruction may be communicated by conversation. In this way influence may be exerted to the most valuable purposes. The conversation of Christians and especially of Christian ministers, should savor of heavenly things. Our conversation, saith the apostle, speaking in the name of believers, is in heaven. Not that it is unlawful for a Christian, or for a gospel minister, on suitable occasions, and in a proper manner, to converse cheerfully about worldly matters; for while we are continued in the world we must necessarily have more or less to do with its concerns, and we are to use it without abusing it, giving God thanks. Those who are set apart for the immediate service of the Lord cannot avoid having some secular affairs to transact. They must, of course, hold some conversation respecting them. But as this world must by no means possess their hearts, so it must not engross their conversation. Having their affections placed on things above, commissioned from heaven to win souls to Christ, their delight should be to speak of the things of the kingdom. Their conversation should be spiritual, savory, tending to benefit all with whom they have social intercourse. If a minister's conversation be unseemly, vain, trifling or worldly, though his preaching should

be ever so sound and weighty; he will be likely to do little or no good. His hearers will judge, and with good reason, that whatever his speculative belief may be, his heart remains unconvinced, that he neither relishes the things he pretends to recommend to others, nor feels their importance.

3. In charity. Charity is the bond of perfectness. It consists in that love to God and to man which fulfils the law. This constitutes that more excellent way, of which the apostle speaks in his first epistle to the Corinthians—more excellent than all miraculous gifts—to be preferred to the most extensive erudition, though accompanied with the eloquence of angels.

There are two great branches of charity, in the one or other of which, some, through an unhappy mistake, are prone to make the whole of that excellent grace to consist. One is a tender compassion towards our fellow men, in needy circumstances, expressed in *almsgiving*, or in kindly affording such relief as may be in our power. This, when performed from right motives, is an important branch of the duty. So important is it, that in vain does any man make pretensions to this grace, if his charity evaporate in empty words, saying, Be ye warmed and be ye filled, and yet withhold those things that are necessary and comfortable, when he is able to grant assistance.

But this by no means constitutes the whole of that great duty. As charity is that love which fulfils the law, so it respects God as well as man; it regards

the first as well as the second table of the law. These two indeed can never be separated. Without piety towards God, there can be no true benevolence towards men. In the exercise of philanthropy, man is to be regarded, not merely as an animal, but as a rational, immortal being. The proper exercise of charity, therefore, extends to the soul as well as to the body. If the state of the nobler part of man, be, while unrenewed, poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, surely it calls for compassion no less than the perishable clay.

Some, it is to be feared, place the whole of their religion in the exercise of that charity which respects only the temporary condition of man. They give much to the poor. They are ready to encourage schemes of benevolence, and seemingly in this way, would compound with the Lord for many misdeeds. But the Lord hates robbery for burnt offering ; nor can that man's charity be acceptable to God, who indulges in licentious habits.

The other branch of charity, upon which some place undue stress, consists in entertaining a favorable opinion of the characters of men, allowing them to be sincere Christians, whatever their religious sentiments may be, even while they have spots that do not pertain to God's children. We must have charity, say they, and quote, but misapply, the words of the apostle, " Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things." This licentious liberality, as it may be styled, has a very pernicious tendency, and is directly contrary to the nature of Christian charity. It

tends to confound all distinction between truth and error, virtue and vice. Charity, must be regulated by some rule, and that rule is the word of God. Liberality of sentiment, beyond what this will warrant, ceases to be charity. Instead of promoting the divine glory, and the true interest of mankind, it casts reproach upon the high and holy ONE and tends to lead men to perdition.

Of true charity, there is no danger, no possibility of exercising too much ; but we must beware of counterfeits. It is highly important for every Christian and especially for every minister to cultivate this grace in order to his usefulness. Such charity as the scriptures enjoin, such as Christ most gloriously displayed, will lead him to relieve, as far as may be in his power, not only the temporal, but the spiritual necessities of mankind. To this end, as the most powerful means that can be used, the private Christian will be careful to live an exemplary, holy life. To this end, the gospel minister in connection with such a life, will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, keeping nothing back *that may be profitable to his hearers*. True charity will moreover lead him, not only to make all due allowances for those errors of men, which arise from ignoance, education and prejudice, yet do not subvert the foundation ; and for those infirmities which may yet consist with a renewed, obedient heart : but to be as distinguishing as possible between the precious and the vile, to detect hypocrites and undeceive the deceived, that they may not perish with a lie in their right hand.

4. In spirit. The holy Spirit is presupposed to possess the heart of every believer, and is indeed the root of every Christian grace. By spirit, therefore, as used in this place, in distinction from the other particulars mentioned in the text, and in connection with them, it seems proper to understand, *a liberal Godlike soul:* or a temper of mind, opposed to a narrow, contracted, pusillanimous disposition. Every disciple of Christ, must possess a portion of the charity before mentioned, for as it is the substance of religion, so it is essential to the Christian character. But it is to be confessed and lamented, that some professors, who are hopefully sincere, are nevertheless so narrow in their views, so contracted in their disposition and so parsimonious in their ways, that they rarely do any thing worthy the benevolent mind of the Christian. They are extremely reluctant in doing good in any manner that requires a little sacrifice of time, talents or pecuniary property. In opposition to this temper, the apostle would have Timothy, and of course, every gospel minister, possess and manifest, on all suitable occasions, an enlarged heart. He would have the professed followers of Christ, especially the officers in his church, partake largely of the spirit of their Divine Master, who though he were rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. He would have them ready to every good work, and cheerfully appropriate the means with which they are furnished, to such ends, as may best subserve the glory of God, and the permanent interest of mankind. He would have them ingenious in devising, liberal and thorough in executing, schemes of usefulness. He would have them

make it evident, that they are governed by a wiser, more courteous, hospitable and excellent spirit, than the men of the world, who are accounted most generous and benevolent.

5. In Faith. The invisible catholic church on earth is in a militant state. Every particular church constitutes a portion of the great spiritual army. Every believer should be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. But ministers, who, under Christ, their leaders in these several divisions, should excel in Christian valour. Their faith should bear them nobly above the world. Against all opposition, to the kingdom of their Lord, they should set their faces as a flint; and like a rock in the ocean, dashed with the foaming billows, stand unmoved. In the strength of the Lord of hosts and by his order, they should dare to encounter, the numerous, powerful, subtle and combined forces of earth and hell.

The character of a gospel minister as an example of believers, in faith, is beautifully exhibited in the following lines, of an eminent and pious poet.

" There stands the messenger of truth. There stands
" The legate of the skies. His theme, Divine,
" His office, sacred, his credentials, clear.
" By him the violated law speaks out
" Its thunders, and by him in strains as sweet
" As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
" He establishes the strong, restores the weak,
" Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
" And arm'd himself in panoply complete
" Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
" Bright as his own, and trains by every rule
" Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
" The sacramental host of God's elect.

6. In purity. With a heart warmed with charity, with a noble, benevolent, enterprising spirit, and a vigorous active faith, the apostle would have Timothy maintain *purity*, and in that respect also be an example of believers. With the sentiment, that the end sanctifies the means, Paul had no fellowship. He remembered, as the disciples of Jesus should ever realize, that to act in character as Christians, we must not only be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves.

The purity enjoined in the text may therefore denote in the first place, *purity of intention.* Let no base design, no unworthy end, no selfish motive, govern your conduct, mar your schemes of usefulness, and defeat your otherwise noble exertions. Let not your zeal for the Lord of hosts, like that of Jehu, be prompted by ostentation.

The word is of extensive import, having reference to the whole moral conduct. All the followers of the holy Jesus should cultivate purity, but those who are called to take the lead among them should be distinguished for their purity. Striving to be holy, harmless, undefiled, they should be careful to keep their garments clean, unspotted from the world. From intemperance, uncleanness, lasciviousness and every thing that defileth, they should guard themselves by constant watchfulness and by prayer without ceasing. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

MY DEAR SON,

A portion of the excellent advice of Paul the aged, to Timothy his beloved son in the faith, hath now, at your desire, been laid before you. Receive the exhortation of the inspired apostle. Let no man despise thy youth. Do nothing despicable. Conduct yourself in a worthy manner. Avoid those levities, indiscretions and that vanity incident to your season of life. God, in his infinite mercy, having hopefully revealed his SON in you, having separated you to the work of the gospel ministry, and having constituted you the pastor of his flock in this place; be thou an example of the believers, in word, in thy knowledge of the scriptures, in the purity of thy language, in veracity and in good judgment—in thy conversation, savoring of the things of the kingdom—in charity, in the holy fervor of thy affections, in thy zeal for the glory of God and in thy good will to men—in spirit, having thy heart enlarged, endeavoring as far as possible to copy the example of the benevolent Saviour, proving thyself worthy to hold an honorable office under the captain of salvation, daring in the name of the Lord of hosts, to encounter the Goliah of infidelity, to lift up a standard against the enemy, coming in like a flood—In purity, having no design which thou wouldst be ashamed to avow before God and man, diligently cultivating that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. In so doing thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.

You will not only carefully remember and diligently peruse this passage, which hath now been in-

sisted upon, but you will also pay particular attention to each of the epistles of this prime minister of our Lord, to his beloved Timothy. Nor can you fail in regarding his advice, to be diligent in searching the scriptures, throughout, knowing that " all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Let me also recommend to you, my son, under Christ, to make Paul your great pattern. Examining his character, surveying his life, may you imbibe a large portion of his excellent spirit. May you possess and display the supreme ardency of his affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. The very name of Jesus was music in his ears. Hence, unmindful of the cold, formal rules of criticism, it is remarkable, that in one of his epistles, he mentions it ten times, in as many successive verses. To Paul, the name of Jesus was as ointment poured forth. Determine, like him, to know nothing among this people, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Let a similar regard for precious immortal souls possess your heart. Let it appear in your wise, diligent, persevering endeavors to win them to Christ. Like him, be engaged in making the most vigorous exertions in your power, to advance the cause you have espoused, to build up the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. Like him count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. Like him count not your life dear unto yourself, so that you may finish your

course with joy and the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Then, like him, in the conclusion shall you be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only but to all them that love his appearing. So shall an entrance be administered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of your dear Lord and Saviour, who will receive you with a "well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" which may God of his infinite mercy grant for Jesus' sake.

In connection with the Pastor elect, the church and congregation, assembling in this place, must feel themselves deeply interested in the solemnities of this day. It having pleased the Lord to incline your hearts to make choice of this young man for your spiritual watchman, and it being agreeable to the minds of the ecclesiastical council, to consecrate him to the arduous service, you will receive him, dear and respected brethren, as an ascension gift. You will gratefully notice the kind ordering of providence in causing so happy an union among you, and in making provision for the supply of the place of your late worthy pastor, who was not suffered to continue by reason of death.

In a youth you cannot expect all the maturity and stability of age. In the exercise of candor, taught to make due allowance, you will not despise his youth, but respect him for the holy office, which, by your desire, he is called to sustain. Consider, dear brethren, that the duties of a pastor and people are mutual. Endeavor to aid him in his work by your prayers to God for him, and by such friendly advice, and assistance as he may need. May his labors be blessed among you to the increase and edification of your body. And may you be prepared to meet before the tribunal of our Lord, to give up your respective accounts and stand in his holy presence with exceeding joy.

MY FATHERS AND BRETHREN IN THE GOSPEL MINISTRY,

Whenever we are called to attend a solemnity of this kind, we are particularly reminded of the vows, the solemn vows of God that are upon us. Placed as a beacon on a hill, that cannot be hid, how holy, how exemplary should we be, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. This we must do would we save our own souls and the souls of our hearers. We must not only point out unto them, the way into the kingdom of heaven, in our public discourses, but by our daily practice, causing a light to shine around us and a voice to be heard behind our steps saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it.* May our minds be ever duly affected with our work. May we be devoted to it, willingly spending and being spent in the blessed service. If

we be found faithful, though Israel be not gathered, we shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. Our labor will not be in vain. God will be glorified and we shall be rewarded. If it may please God to prosper us, so that in the great day of account, each of us may be enabled to adopt the language of the prophet, "Here am I and the children thou hast given me," inexpressible will be our joy. To this end, while conscious of the integrity, of our intentions, let us be wise as serpents. Called to act our part in the evil day when iniquity abounds, when the love of many waxes cold, when the enemies of religion assume a brazen front, endeavouring to remove the great pillars of both church and state, we have need to take to ourselves the whole armor of God that we may be able to withstand. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer." —Thus arrayed, putting our trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, we shall have nothing to fear. Then shall we never be ashamed nor confounded. Though the earth be removed we shall not be dismayed. Though the material universe be dissolved in flames, we shall have lost nothing! Since Christ lives, his church shall live also. Wherefore, dear brethren, be of good couarge and rejoice in the Lord always.

Let this whole assembly be reminded that it is their duty to follow those who are to be examples of believers, so far as they follow Christ. Remember the way of duty is the only way of safety. All are required to believe in Christ, to the salvation of their souls. Jesus, my hearers, through faith in him, is the only ark of safety, the only city of refuge. Suffer each one of you the word of exhortation. For thy life escape to this city, or the avenger of blood will overtake thee. Enter into this ark or the coming deluge, not of water but of fire, will devour thee. For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. By the same word which brought the flood of waters upon the wicked inhabitants of the old world, know assuredly that the heavens and the earth which now exist, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and the perdition of ungodly men. But there are glorious mansions prepared for the righteous, who shall shine forth in the kingdom of their heavenly Father as stars in the firmament for ever and ever. Amen.

The Charge,

BY THE

Rev. ELIJAH PARSONS.

Dear Sir,

YOU having been regularly invested with the ministerial office, by prayer to the king of Zion, and that apostolic rite, the laying on of the hands of the presbytery—We now declare that you are authorized to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments of the New-Testament, to lay on hands in ordination, and to do whatever appertains to the office of ministers of the gospel, who are styled, in the sacred writings, sometimes, Elders, and sometimes Bishops.

And we *charge* you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in whose name you was baptized—take heed to the ministry you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it. First of all, take heed to yourself; give yourself to prayer, as well as to reading and meditation; pray always, with all prayer and supplication, *in the spirit* for yourself and for your people also, and watch thereunto, with all perseverance. Exhibit the amiable beauty of religion, by your example, as well as by your representations from the pulpit. Be blameless as the steward of God, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour.

Be an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Moreover: We charge you, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing in his kingdom; take heed to the flock, over which, the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Preach THE WORD. Be instant in season, and out of season. In doctrine show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. Study the Bible—be diligent, be honest and impartial in studying it; and shun not to declare all the counsel of God. Rightly divide the word of truth, and show yourself approved of God, a workman that need not be ashamed.

Be careful to know the state of your flock, and adapt your ministrations, both in public and private, to their more special circumstances.

Warn the wicked, instruct the ignorant, comfort the feeble-minded, bind up the broken-hearted, and edify believers in faith, in love, humility and every other Christian grace.

We have given you this charge, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who in the presence of Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, and to whom you must render an account, in the day, when he shall appear, to judge the world in righteousness.

A charge, solemn and weighty, may well impress your mind with serious and deep concern ; but be not discouraged : make the presence and strength of God, the Redeemer, your hope and confidence, and by the sufficiency of his grace, you will be enabled to execute with uprightness, the trust he has committed to you.

Be strong, therefore, in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and when he shall appear the second time in the glory of his Father, and with the holy angels, he will say unto you : "Well done, good and faithful servant,"—"enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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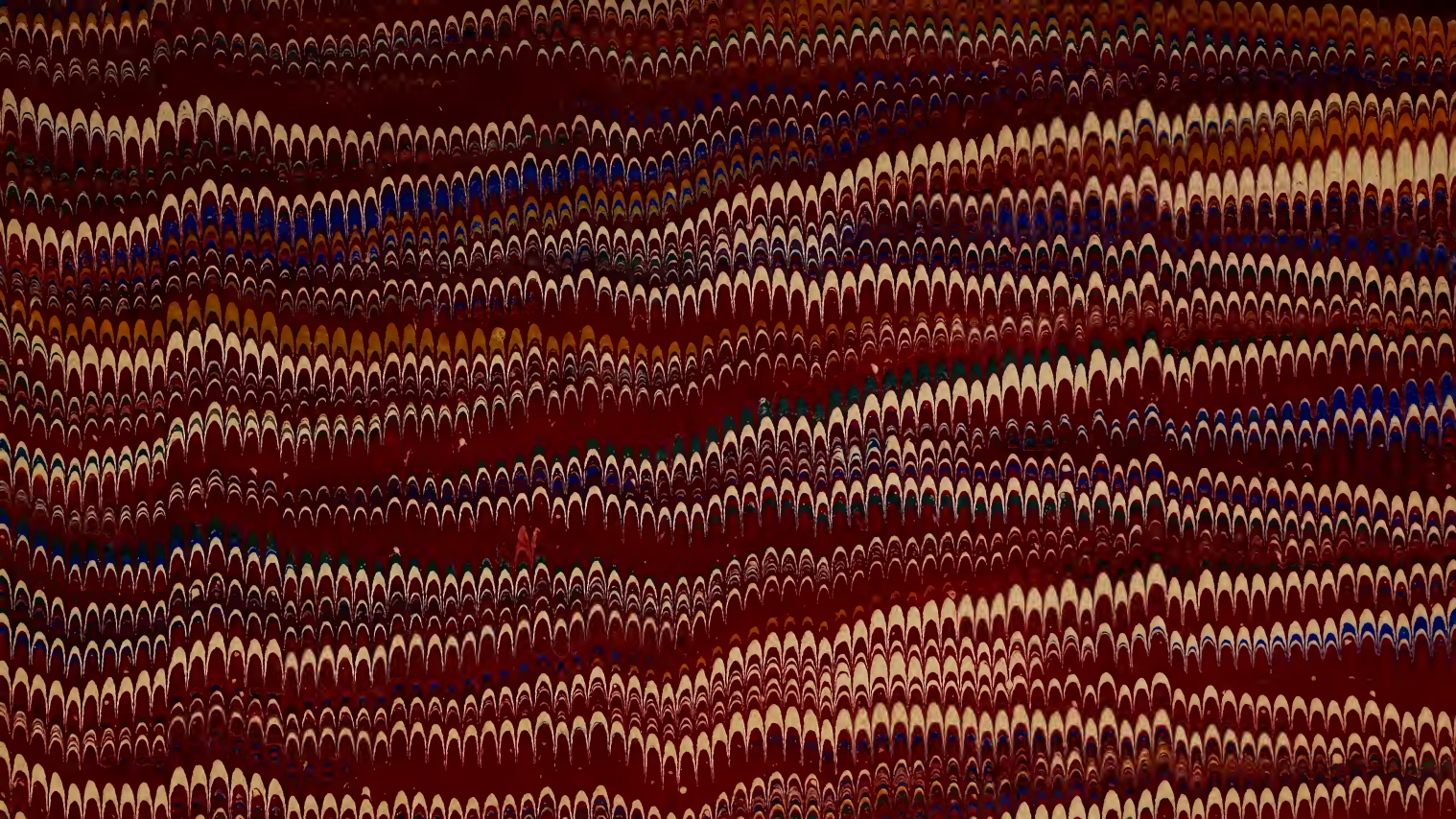

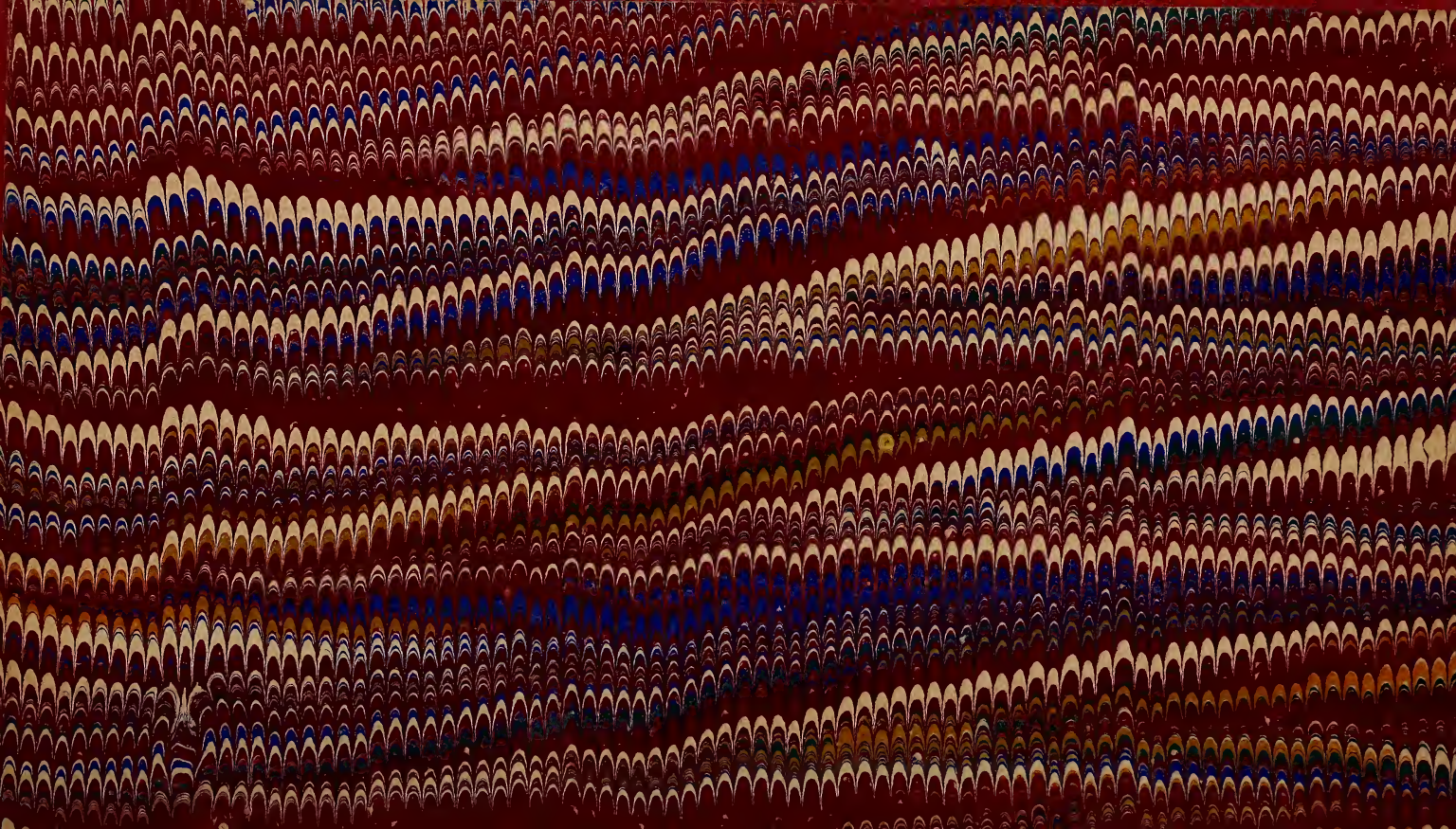

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